

Committee on Resources

Witness Testimony

Testimony Submitted By:
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Documents pertaining to the United Nations Man And the biosphere program date back several years to the 1960's. Because of the amount of information included in these documents, this account can only reference a number of the studies, research papers, etc. that have been generated giving titles and pertinent information as practicable. Because of familiarity, I will use our own Champlain Adirondack Biosphere Reserve (CABR) as a starting point. From the, "Strategic Plan For the Biosphere Reserve Program", we find that the Forest Service is the Administrator of the CABR.

The CABR is the 4th largest in the world (10 million acres, about 70% privately owned) and the largest in North America. It is the heaviest populated in the world. The process of nominating our region as a Biosphere Reserve was begun in 1984 by an ad-hoc U.S. and Canadian panel. There were no public hearings and no local officials were included or notified of the process. At the 4th World Wilderness Conference held in Colorado in September 1987 a case study, "Proposed Adirondack-Lake Champlain Basin Biosphere Reserve", prepared by James C. Dawson, Center for Earth and Environmental Science, State University of New York, Plattsburgh, New York 12901 USA, was presented. The nomination dossier was submitted to UNESCO in March of 1989 and designation as a Biosphere Reserve was approved in April of 1989. The process, 5 years in the making, was still virtually unknown to local residents and local government officials. Only the state agency, the Adirondack Park Agency, had involvement as a sponsor of the nominating process. Soon after this "honorary" designation came federal legislation. The, "Lake Champlain Special Designation Act of 1990", created the Lake Champlain Management Conference (LCMC) and funded it with \$25 million over a five year period. Also, the "Northern Forest Lands Council" (NFLC) was created to study the 26 million acre northern forests. These initiatives were intended to address the allegations of significant pollution in Lake Champlain and largescale conversion of the northern forests to development. Subsequently, little in the way of pollution or forest land conversion was proven. Knowledge of these, seemingly, unrelated initiatives is important and related to CABR.

From extensive research of the MAB program it becomes evident that the degree of UN involvement in a particular Biosphere Reserve increases directly with the amount of existing regulations and regulatory authority(ies) already in place. With the New York State created and appointed Adirondack Park Agency responsible for land use control in much of the CABR and now with the federally created and funded LCMC and NFLC, the necessary "tools" were/are in place. Regulatory changes now have several "vehicles" available to complete the framework to become a full fledged Biosphere Reserve complying with the parameters as defined by the United Nations. Upon learning of the MAB program in 1990, however, local governments and local residents have resisted the regulatory intentions of LCMC and NFLC plus other proposed legislation such as establishment of an upper Hudson-Champlain Heritage.

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From: The 4th World Wilderness Congress/WORLDWIDE CONSERVATION

Proceedings of the Symposium on BIOSPHERE RESERVES

MAB September 14-17, 1987

YMCA of the Rockies

Estes Park, Colorado, U.S.A.

From the paper presented by James Dawson. Under Proposed Core Area, "The Adirondack-Lake Champlain Basin includes several land classes that are strictly protected and which satisfy the core criteria".

Under Proposed Buffer Zone, "The Adirondack-Lake Champlain Basin proposal includes a substantial buffer zone that is strictly delineated by a New York State statute that defines the meets and bounds of the "blue line" that forms the boundary of the Adirondack Park".

"...considerable ad hoc cooperation already exists among those responsible for management and those involved in research. But this is not enough. Population growth, increased levels of development and external pollution sources all threaten the region's biological heritage. There is a clear need to look forward to shape future development and to provide additional protection to safeguard the region's wild areas and genetic resources."

COMMENT--The last passage was included in the conclusion of the paper referenced to petition for acceptance by UNESCO as a biosphere reserve. The only reason for publication of this paper was biosphere reserve designation. Clearly the author(s) and sponsors of CABR were/are seeking additional regulatory "protections" of an international nature for this 10 million acres of the northeast and they are seeking it from UNESCO.

Finally: The 4th World Wilderness Congress urges governments:

"To integrate representative wildlands and protected natural areas (core areas) in biosphere reserves with significant cultural landscapes which demonstrate sustainable uses of particular ecosystems, in accordance with the World Conservation Strategy." (underline added)

From: EVOLUTION OF THE BIOSPHERE RESERVE CONCEPT (1987)

Gonzalo Halffter and Exequiel Ezcurra

Instituto de Ecologia

Apartado Postal 18-845

Deleg. Miguel Hidalgo

11800 Mexico, D. F., Mexico

(presented at the 4th World Wilderness Congress)

"Transition areas, especially where cooperation is actively pursued, seem in many cases to be the only way of enlarging (with all the precautions, criticisms and extra efforts that this may imply) the available space for conserving plants and animals."

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"As time passes, the space problem appears to be increasingly the main limitation to conserving the biotic richness of the vast majority of ecosystems. It seems impossible to base conservation only on core areas or on other systems of completely protected areas. Dasmann (1984) clearly points out: 'All reserves must ultimately depend on the good management of the lands outside the reserve boundaries, and on an attitude of people toward the more mobile animal species...'"

"The protection of animals dangerous to man (which, on the other hand are often spectacular faunal elements) brings forth some very delicate problems as demographic pressures increase on the boundaries of reserves. In countries where this pressure is not so strong and can therefore be controlled with administrative measures, some remarkable examples of recovery have been attained (for example, the tiger of Amur, in the east of the Soviet Union: see Zhivotchenko 1984)."

"Finally, the expansion of the core area into the cooperation zone is a possible response to the great problem of lack of space to which we have referred before."

"The successful inclusion of local participation in biosphere reserves raises new questions: (a) What can the reserve expect from the local populations and vice versa? (b) To what extent can local populations make decisions, especially when these concern research and conservation? (c) Which actions are desirable and which are not?

(d) In which areas or zones can a certain action be carried out and in which not, since its implementation could affect or could be contradictory with other reserve priorities?"

"...each reserve has a dual objective, First, it contributes to developing alternatives that will allow a better living standard for the traditionally margined peasants of the economically disadvantaged areas."

COMMENT: The authors of this paper refer to "administrative measures" to enforce such projects as predator (re) introduction. Currently there is an inordinate amount of attention to introduction of the wolf into the Adirondacks against scientific indications of inadequate food supply and overwhelming local resident and government opposition. Local government will probably carry the day in this one for now. Clearly the intent here is for administrative policies to supersede the wishes of local populations. Reference to "peasants" is important for comparison of the program's diverse global strategy. In many areas these reserves are located (placed?) in areas of extreme poverty. In other words, a full bowl of rice is much more important than sovereignty over land and resource use. A minute improvement in the living conditions of the indigenous population could easily gain support for international control of a particular area. These conditions do not exist in America and other measures for "acceptance" of biosphere reserve conditions and parameters will be necessary.

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From: NATURE AND RESOURCES--ACTION PLAN FOR BIOSPHERE RESERVES

UNESCO 1984

"Although each government has its own priorities, from an international perspective there is a minimum set of activities which should be implemented in each biosphere reserve and for which international organizations should provide support as appropriate. These are: ...preparation of a management plan which addresses biosphere reserve functions. The approved Action Plan, together with an indication of financing requirements, will be submitted in due course for consideration by the governing organs of UNEP, UNESCO, FAO and IUCN."

This document describes the different areas: Core areas with no human activity other than that necessary for research. Buffer zones where,

"...efforts are made to develop co-operative activities which ensure that uses are managed in a manner compatible with the conservation and research functions of the other areas..."

"Biosphere reserves must have adequate long-term legislative, regulatory or institutional protection."

"Normally there is no need for changes in land-holding or regulation following the designation of a biosphere reserve except where changes are required to ensure the strict protection of the core area or of specific research sites."

"The Co-operation Function--For this reason, the range of interests involved in planning and implementing the biosphere reserve concept typically included biosphere reserve administrators, natural and social scientists, resource managers, environmental and development interests, government decision-makers and local people."

From the Action Plan section: "Every government establishes its own priorities for implementing activities in biosphere reserves"

From Objectives and Actions: "Action 2. In order to move rapidly and systematically in expanding the network of biosphere reserves, Unesco, UNEP, FAO and IUCN should co-ordinate their planned activities and develop a phased programme to identify gaps in ecosystem representation and biosphere reserve functions, and to stimulate action based on these evaluations."

"Action 6. Unesco should immediately establish a Biosphere Reserve Scientific Advisory Panel to refine criteria for the selection and management of biosphere reserves, to evaluate proposals for new biosphere reserves and to review from time to time the effectiveness of the network."

"The long term security of biosphere reserves should be assured through legal instruments, regulations or a management framework directly applicable to the biosphere reserve or to its separate management units

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and land ownerships. In many countries, the legal and administrative protection normally afforded to national parks, ecological research areas and other protected areas is adequate for the protection of biosphere reserves. Where such legal and administrative protection does not exist, it should be developed especially for the area concerned before it is nominated as a biosphere reserve."

This provision substantiates the view that the organizers and proponents of the biosphere reserve program

have a vested interest in regulatory provisions being in place prior to significant UN involvement. As long as the regulatory provisions are in place, regardless of lack of application and/or enforcement, the requirements of the reserve program are considered to be complied with.

"A wide range of situations, involving various combination of legal instruments, administrative regulations, and voluntary co-operation are possible depending on the particular ecological, socio-economic, cultural and institutional context of the reserve."

"Action 8. In order to assess the adequacy of existing laws and to help design new legislation, where appropriate, IUCN in co-operation with FAO should collect and synthesize information on the managerial requirements of biosphere reserves, on legislative measures used by government to secure these, and on the institutional arrangements which can be adopted for the satisfactory administration and management of biosphere reserves."

"Action 11. Unesco, in co-operation with UNEP, FAO and IUCN, should continue to provide missions to governments to advise on the selection, establishment, legislation and management of national systems of biosphere reserves. Biosphere reserves should be recommended as an integral part of any National Conservation Strategy."

"Action 22. In order to maximize the contribution of biosphere reserves to the international environmental monitoring programmes, UNEP and Unesco should encourage governments to make biosphere reserves available for global environmental monitoring programmes."

"Action 25. In order to ensure that large development projects contain the requisite elements of conservation, the World Bank and other international and regional development-financing organizations should ensure that any development project financed by them should not affect the basic functions of existing biosphere reserve. These organizations should support the establishment of biosphere reserves as a compensatory measure to mitigate the adverse ecological effects of the development project, financed by them,..." "There may be conflict between the requirements of short term economic pursuits and conservation; there may be different views on land use; and the local and national interests may diverge. Careful consultation and planning are necessary...". "The biosphere reserve should be able to evolve in harmony with all these changes to enable local populations to

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adjust to demographic and economic transitions without environmental deterioration."

"Action 30. Unesco should assist governments to...use their biosphere reserves for field training of specialists in ecology and life sciences, as well as future biosphere reserve managers."

"Action 33. Governments should be asked to contribute to the biosphere reserve information system by providing the following types of information: ...the geographical, biological (including species' lists), and social characteristics of each biosphere reserve...the details of management plans.

From: BIOSPHERE RESERVE NOMINATION

LAKE FOREST BIOGEOGRAPHICAL PROVINCE

A Report to the United States MAB Directorate on Biosphere Reserves

Prepared by Ad-hoc U.S.-Canadian Panel on Biosphere Reserve Selection

December 1986

"An important objective of the Action Plan involves the expansion of the international network. The selection of biosphere reserves in the Lake Forest Biogeographical province is a joint undertaking of the United States and Canadian National MAB Committees which addresses this objective. It is part of a systematic review to identify and fill the remaining gaps in the biosphere reserve networks in each country."

"U.S. MAB also prepared preliminary list of candidate sites based on information provided by Federal and State agencies, the National Park Service's Natural Landmarks Program, The Nature Conservancy, and from a map and tabular listing of protected ecological research areas (U.S. Geographical Survey 1985)."

From: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ADMINISTRATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF

VOYAGERS NATIONAL PARK By Donald D. Parmeter-June 1987

When Voyageurs National Park was being considered for biosphere reserve status the governor of Minnesota commissioned a council to study the program and its relevance, benefits or detriments for the state of Minnesota. Donald Parmeter was chairman of this council. The recommendation from the council was not to support the nomination:

"Much uncertainty remains over the potential effect of this designation on the management and use of Voyageurs National Park."

In their decision the council cited a 1986 Senate Bill (S. 2092)

"...which would give biosphere reserves preservation priority in the United States. The bill included the following language: 'Those units of the National Park System that are, following nomination by the United States, accorded the designation of Biosphere Reserve under the

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International Man and the Biosphere Program or World Heritage Site by the World Heritage Committee shall receive priority attention and consideration for prompt, heightened resource data collection, monitoring and resource protection efforts."

Based on the research of this council the following recommendation was made regarding the nomination:
"It would be prudent for Voyageurs National Park to be removed from any further consideration as a Biosphere Reserve."

This was the first time in the program's history that a nomination was withdrawn. It was also the first time that any government entity had seriously investigated the biosphere program. There have since been areas

withdrawn because of local opposition. Also we must here refer to House Bill HR 2379. The, "National Park System Protection and Resources Management Act of 1983". Internationally Recognized Areas, "Sec 9. (a) Those park units accorded the designation of biosphere reserve or world heritage site shall receive priority attention and consideration for prompt, heightened resource data collection, monitoring, and resource protection efforts." "(b) It is the sense of the Congress that with respect to any international park located within the United States and any adjacent nation which has been recognized and designated a Biosphere Reserve under the auspices of the international conservation community, the responsible park management officials of the United States and such nation, in conjunction with appropriate legislative and parliamentary officials, establish means and methods of ensuring that the integrity of such Biosphere Reserve is maintained,..." THIS BILL PASSED THE HOUSE IN 1983.

Letter to: Dr. Bernd von Drost, Director, Division of Ecology, UNESCO

From: Thomas E. Lovejoy, Chairman, U.S. National Committee for

Man and the Biosphere March 14, 1989

"The states have jointly prepared the nomination dossier, which includes a comprehensive biosphere reserve zonation and a statement on the status of a cooperative MAB program now being structured to implement biosphere reserve functions. The program is being developed under the general aegis of a memorandum of understanding on environmental management of Lake Champlain involving the states and the Province of Quebec. Representatives from the Provincial Government of Quebec and the Mont St. Hillaire Biosphere Reserve are cooperating in the planning effort."

The above reference was the cover letter for materials which nominated our region as a biosphere reserve. The Mont St. Hillaire reserve is considered as a possible "satellite area" with the CABR. There was significant international effort and agreement prior to this final submittal. No where in the process is there reference to participation by any level of government and certainly no local citizens were involved.

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CONCLUSION

There is much more material but the concepts become redundant.

The Man and the Biosphere program has operated in this country completely free of any government scrutiny. There is state government involvement and that occurs when the nominating papers are complete and a signature is needed. Only in Minnesota was the program scrutinized and subsequently the nomination withdrawn. The Minnesota Citizen Council concluded that there was nothing to gain from the biosphere program; only much to lose.

There are, particularly in the earlier years of the MAB program, papers referencing international commissions and organizations and references to required regulatory framework and legislative requirements that would be necessary to be a full "partner" in the program. These regulatory requirements have been "softpeddled" in recent years. With more awareness of the MAB program, proponents are using

approaches which emphasize cooperation and local involvement and approval. There is much attention focused on local participation. There is, however, little in the way of records of public meetings, hearings or even notification of local (town/county) units of government.

Also, reference to the World Bank and financing of projects within biosphere reserves merits some concern. As burdensome as further environmental regulation would be, financing restricted by environmental justification of the project or environmental "blackmail" (requiring donations to environmental organizations for financing approval, etc.) would most assuredly become more abusive than regulation.

Innocuous appearing legislation similar to the "Endangered Species Act" that was originally intended to save the bald eagle, could very well pass. Previously mentioned HR 2379 passed the House. In 1983 most of the biosphere reserve activity in this country was limited to our National Park System. HR 2379 appealed to Congress to "save" the national parks from further deterioration. Who could argue? Few did. However, in 1984 the biosphere reserve initiative took off "in earnest" with much of the activity on private property. HR 2379 did not distinguish on the basis of ownership. Had similar legislation passed the Senate, all land owners in designated areas could now be under National Park Service authority and UNESCO land use policies.

As with Voyageurs National Park, we as a nation have nothing to gain in this program. We are the most environmentally sensitive nation on earth. The notion that we need the international community to further protect our lands (both public and private) is absurd. The prospect that this program will evolve to an international accord approaching treaty status is real. The possibility that an international pact will entangle our ability to utilize our resources and lands is real. Given past legislation (HR 2379 & S. 2092) that would have elevated the status of these "voluntarily" nominated areas to requiring international regulatory attention is more than just bothersome. The idea that we can allow loss of our sovereignty on large areas of American soil is a

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slippery slope we should not test. Even if we embrace the lofty concept of mutual international importance the process will have been agreed to but future terms may well change. As we saw with the Biodiversity Treaty a few years ago, this area of international agreements needs to be approached cautiously. We need HR 901 so citizens are included, local government can have a voice and Congress can over see this program.

Finally, if the circumstantial indications are incorrect; if this is indeed, purely a scientific and educational effort to enhance our knowledge and understanding of earth's processes then it can withstand the scrutiny of citizens, local government and congress. Supporters of the MAB program should support HR 901 so we all can share in this educational process.

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